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AMERICAN ART NEWS

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THE WATER COLOR SHOW

Signs are not lacking that water color paintings are at last coming into their own in the esteem of collectors and home makers. All over the country there seems to be a growing appreciation of the medium. Within the last year a notable change has taken place in the attitude of art lovers and decorators. Great stimulation of interest resulted from the tremendous exhibition of the water colors by Winslow Homer, John Singer Sargent and Dodge Macknight, arranged last spring by the Boston Art Club. This display was something more than stimulating, it was exciting. It proved as nothing before the power of water color in the hands of the master. It tended to destroy the feeling that there was something innately dilettante about it.

The Boston show was followed, early in the present season, by an extremely important assemblage of American water colors, both academic and modern, by the Brooklyn Museum. Now comes the biggest of all water color shows at the Fine Arts Building, New York, in which for the first time the American Water Color Society and the New York Water Color Club have joined in forming an exhibition. There are 464 pictures in the display and among the artists exhibiting are found many of the leading personalities in American art. A visit to the show will establish forever in the mind of the art lover the decorative importance of the medium.

Two things served for many years to keep water color from the place it should have occupied in America. One was the dabbling in water color of too many hands. For a while it seemed that women had given over the gentle household employment of their grandmothers, and had all gone in for a career with pigment and brush. The same thing happened to water color that would happen to poetry if two-thirds of the population undertook to write it. Mediocre examples, execrable even, got into the regular water color exhibitions. The effect was bad and lasting.

The other unfavorable factor was the impression almost universally held that pictures done in water color were perishable, and had to be most tenderly cared for. If one wished to have the feeling that his possession was enduring and substantial, he had to buy oil paintings. Nothing, of course, could be farther from the truth. Water color is imperishable, while oil is destroyed by the ages. The pictures that have survived from Egypt and Rome are water colors. Happily, this discouraging impression of the public has been largely dispelled.

When it comes to the artistic value of the medium, justice compels the assertion that it affords spontaneity and delicacy of expression that is not afforded by oil. It must be used rapidly and with surety. It inhibits finicky habits of technique. Only the worthy can worthily use it.

So far as its decorative aspect is concerned, water color has a luminosity and a strength that

Mr. Lachman

THE AMERICAN ART NEWS has received the following communication from Mr. Harry B. Lachman, in Chicago, which it reprints without comment:

"Your leading editorial of the December 17th issue has interested me immensely. You say, 'If Mr. Lachman is correctly quoted by the newspapers . . . the assertions of Harry B. Lachman are pretty much nonsense.'

"I was correctly quoted in the article printed in the Chicago *Daily News*, the paper to which I gave the interview upon which your editorial article was based. However, because of newspaper space, my remarks were not fully quoted. Hence I wish to make some additions to the remarks that have already been printed and, with your kind assistance, get them before the art loving public, whether they are nonsense or fact.

"The fact that Americans cannot receive criticism surprises me. This in view of the criticism that Americans heap upon others. Let me call your attention to the article printed in THE AMERICAN ART NEWS under a Philadelphia date line quoting George de Forest Brush as saying that 'Rodin was one of the most outrageous brutes and degenerates that ever lived!' Right here in Chicago I was told that one of the leading American sculptors, in a public talk recently, said that Rodin's influence was as devastating to sculpture as the war was to the world. Those things are surprising. Please remember also the severe criticism of the modernist French school exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum, in which it was said that the pictures were painted by insane men.

"I was quoted in the newspaper article as advising American painters to study in France. That is correct, but the thought is not clearly stated. To go to France to study art does not necessarily mean that the painter should himself go to France. By that expression I mean studying the methods of the French masters. Whistler found it necessary to follow the Japanese, but he did not paint as the Japanese painted. I don't know whether you claim Whistler as American. Inness, there is no doubt, followed the teachings of the Barbizon school. Certainly the French Impressionist school shows its effects in the present day school of American art, but it seems to me that Americans have not added anything to the Impressionistic school, nor do I believe that they really understood the great fundamentals of that school. Certainly they have not profited by the lessons of Cézanne.

"Why can't we be let alone with our pride in our artists and our American School?' you ask in your editorial. 'It is a good thing for us,' you add.

"But, my dear friends, it is not good for you. Self satisfaction, we are taught, is stagnation. For the artist, the creator of anything, self satisfaction is suicide.

"Perhaps we obtain a wrong impression in Europe of American art from the exhibits of the prize winning clique. Are the prize winners the representative American painters? When the French government invited the American painters to give a comprehensive exhibition at the Luxembourg Museum, the clique did not include pictures by the great Americans, Sargent, Whistler, Inness, Homer, etc., nor did they want to allow M. Léonce Benedite, curator of the Luxembourg to add the Luxembourg's paintings from its permanent collection by these artists. Did they fear comparison? The pictures were exhibited, but only after a long drawn out controversy.

"Let me quote a few lines from the leading editorial in the December 13th Memphis (Tenn.) *Commercial Appeal*: 'The fact is that we in America know very little about art and care little. There is some affectation of interest in it, but little knowledge.' I believe Mr. Mooney, the Memphis editor, wrote truly in that. There must be some people in America who think we are not speaking nonsense when we criticize."

makes it particularly useful in the home. The dim light that sometimes makes an oil painting negligible often leaves a water color comparatively unobscured.

THE AMERICAN ART NEWS congratulates the American Water Color Society and the New York Water Color Club on their combined exhibition, and also on the bright outlook for their medium.

Peroxide Restores Youth of Art, Too

LONDON—Ancient art treasures in the British Museum are being restored by Dr. Alexander Scott, who is using a recent discovery of his. A vapor of hydrogen peroxide has worked wonders in bringing out the original colors and designs both in ancient manuscripts and on metal.

Two Pictures by H. H. Ahl Stolen

BOSTON—Two paintings by Henry Hammond Ahl are reported stolen. They were taken from an art store in Bromfield street, where they were being fitted with frames. The large one is a wood interior, 20 by 16, an upright, and the other canvas is a wood interior with a brook, 8 by 10.

New York to See Art of Goncharova and Larionov



COSTUME DESIGN FOR "CONTES RUSSES"
 Courtesy of Miss Mary Wiborg.

By MIKHAIL LARIONOV

An event of interest in the art world will be the "vernissage" on Tuesday afternoon, January 10, at the Kingore Gallery, of the first American exhibition of paintings and stage designs by the distinguished Russian artists, Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov. Coming direct from Paris, where it has been a feature of the recent exhibition of the Mir Iskusstva (World of Art) group, as well as the sensation of the recently concluded Autumn Salon, the work of Goncharova and Larionov bids fair to create a stir in local art circles.

The collection brought over for exhibition consists of one hundred and twenty-five oils, water colors, pastels and drawings, representing virtually every phase of the varied activity of the two artists. There will be certain extra attractions on the opening day and Mr. Kingore is fortunate in having secured for this occasion the social patronage of Miss Mary Hoyt Wiborg, as well as the artistic support of Dr. Christian Brinton, who has done such valiant

work in bringing the contemporary Russian school before the American public.

Those familiar with the production of Goncharova and Larionov describe it as stimulatingly modernistic and typically Slavonic, as being notable for decorative design, fresh, tonic color, and that profusion of imaginative fantasy which is such an essential characteristic of the Russian creative genius. Though their work in general is virtually unknown in America, followers of the Ballet Russe will remember Goncharova as the designer of the scenery and costumes for the original production of "Le Coq d'Or," while Larionov's setting for "Contes Russes" and "Soleil de Minuit," and particularly for the recently performed "Bouffon," by Prokoviev, have given him a unique position among the newer masters of stage décor. After closing at the Kingore Gallery, January 21, the Goncharova-Larionov exhibition will be displayed at the Worcester Art Museum and the Chicago Art Club.

Obituary

EDWARD HORNOR COATES

Edward Horner Coates, ex-president of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, is dead at his home in Philadelphia. He was the husband of the poet, Florence Earle Coates. He was born in 1846. He served as a director of the Academy from 1877 to 1890, and as president from 1890 to 1906. He was a stockholder from 1906 until his death. In 1915 he was awarded the Academy's gold medal. He was succeeded as president by John Frederick Lewis, present incumbent.

Mr. Coates made many gifts to the Academy, among them the bronze reproduction of Benjamin Rush's "Washington" which, in its wooden form, is still to be seen at Independence Hall; a bronze head, "Nymph of the Schuylkill," also a replica of a work in wood by Rush, and water colors by Fortuny and Corlandi. He was one of a group who presented John McLure Hamilton's "Richard Vaux" to the institution.

KATHERINE BUFFUM

Miss Katherine Buffum, who was killed last week when the horse she was riding threw her, was a talented portrait painter and sketch artist of Philadelphia. Her sudden death preceded, by eighteen days, an exhibition of her silhouettes at the Print Club, which was to have been on view during the week of Jan. 16. On the latter day alone the club will show the silhouettes as a memorial to their creator.

MRS. GILBERT GAUL

Mrs. Gilbert Gaul, widow of the well known American painter of Civil war subjects, died December 31 at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Schieffley, in Orangeburg, S. C. Mrs. Gaul was taken ill last winter shortly after she had arranged a memorial exhibition of the works of

her late husband, at the Braus Galleries. Mr. Gaul died in New York in 1919.

Vienna Art Societies Protest

Transfer of "Rossiana" to Rome

VIENNA—A committee of the Vienna art societies has protested to the government against transferring the "Rossiana" to Rome.

The "Rossiana" is one of the finest and most valuable libraries of Austria. Apart from manuscripts of the middle ages, magnificent miniature codices of the early Italian renaissance and high renaissance are to be found in it.

The Austrian law prohibits the exporting or selling works of art and of antiques, and in this, as in some previous cases, the government is breaking the law.

Paintings Signed With Famous

Names Are Selling Cheaply in Russia

MOSCOW—The economic policy permitting free trade within Russia has brought from their hiding places a large number of paintings, some attributed to famous artists. Among these are works by William Hogarth, Jean Baptiste Greuze, Christian Dietrich, Rosa di Tivoli and others, the Italian and Dutch predominating.

The prices these works, if they are genuine, are bringing are ridiculously small. A portrait of a woman attributed to Greuze was sold to a foreign buyer for \$250.

Trenton Art Alliance Formed

TRENTON, N. J.—Trenton has formed an art association under the title of the Trenton Art Alliance. As Trenton is chiefly an industrial city the organizers are planning to lay emphasis on the handicrafts as well as the fine arts. An exhibition of prints from the Brooklyn Society of Etchers is soon to be shown.